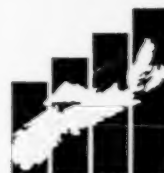


Voluntary Planning

Business Plan 2003-2004



**VOLUNTARY
PLANNING**

A Citizens Policy Forum

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Message from Minister and Chair, Voluntary Planning

Voluntary Planning has recently been revised and restructured and is ready to provide a valuable and relevant contribution to Nova Scotia's future. With a newly appointed Board and a recently recruited set of volunteers, VP has an exciting year ahead in 2003/04.

Three particular highlights are worthy of note for the upcoming fiscal year. Following considerable analysis and consideration, a decision will be made in the early part of the year on the subject of Population Dynamics. The changing population trends in the communities of our province need to be addressed in what amounts to a visionary exercise for the long-term future of our citizens. Depending on recommendations it receives, Cabinet may be asking Voluntary Planning to conduct a major consultative project on this important subject.

The newly formed Sector Committees of Voluntary Planning will play a key role in policy shaping in 2003/04. They will be engaged in providing advice to the VP Board, Ministers and cabinet on prioritized policy issues and opportunities from within their spheres of interest.

Lastly, as part of its own long-term vision and plan, Voluntary Planning will be starting the process of moving its very successful and proven model of citizen consultation to the community level. During 2003/04, an outreach strategy for this purpose will be developed with the expectation that initial piloting and implementation will then follow in subsequent years. This plan and concept is very exciting and will significantly enhance the opportunity for citizens to help shape the policies that affect them.

J. D. Eisenhower
Chair, Voluntary Planning

Minister Michael Baker

Business Plan for Voluntary Planning 2003—2004

Mission

To measurably improve the social and economic well being of all Nova Scotians by providing the Premier and Cabinet with valuable volunteer and citizen-based advice on relevant policy issues for today and for the future.

Planning Context

Many of the issues of importance to society are long term and directional in nature. Many citizens wish to play a part in shaping the strategic directions of the future, which may extend into 10-20 year time frames and well beyond electoral mandates.

The business of government is carried on and delivered, to a great extent, by the departmental organizations. This arrangement, by its nature, tends to focus more on implementing legislated or otherwise mandated department business. Many issues, both existing and emerging, being cross-societal or horizontal in nature, range across departmental boundary lines.

A major strength of Voluntary Planning is to help with these two areas of horizontality and long-term planning. Voluntary Planning, through its excellent cadre of volunteer citizen leaders and experts, can readily address matters of strategic importance to the province and provide sound advice on policy options to government decision-makers.

Government is striving to be more open, transparent, and accountable. If successful in these efforts, tremendous benefits can be achieved through increased confidence and trust between citizens, stakeholders, politicians, and government leaders. An exceptional approach to making this happen involves citizen participation and collaborative policy development.

Involvement of the private or non-governmental sectors and citizens at the outset of any thinking on new policies results in better understanding, consensus, buy-in, decision-making, lower implementation costs, trust, credibility and confidence. Over time, and if applied consistently, this way of doing business will improve democracy and consistently attract strong candidates for public office.

Voluntary Planning's system of consulting, researching, and engaging the best people on the complex issues of the day offers a highly attractive, cost-effective approach to policy development. In the recent past, we have tackled fiscal management and non-resident land ownership, as major projects. In the future, it is possible for Voluntary Planning to become involved with the development of provincial strategies on lifelong learning, labour market, immigration, health care, or a vision for the province, as examples in a wide range of important policy matters.

This key service of providing policy advice to government, based on the input of citizens and volunteers, and other experts is normally accomplished through major project exercises, led by selected Task Forces.

The Voluntary Planning leadership entity is its Board of Directors, which relies heavily on regular input from Sector Committees. These six Sector groups are designed to cover the full spectrum of Nova Scotia society and are comprised of almost one hundred highly committed volunteers. These Sector Committees are:

- Education and Life Long Learning
- Health and Social Well-being
- Economic Growth and Competitiveness
- Natural Resources
- Environmental Quality and Stewardship

- Fiscal Management Policy

We are also able to draw on several hundred other volunteers who are part of an alumni network, readily available to provide assistance.

The main strength, or opportunity, which the unique Voluntary Planning organization represents, is its ability to provide supplementary advice to Government decision makers, based on citizen input. This source of advice is not normally available to other governments in Canada.

Resourcing levels are important to the viability and success of Voluntary Planning. Insufficient funding may present a threat by limiting the work that can be undertaken. Voluntary Planning also depends exclusively on funding outside its core budget for major task force initiatives. Partnership possibilities, particularly with the federal government, may lessen this resource concern over time, and is a potential which we will continue to investigate.

One contextual factor of note, in terms of business planning for Voluntary Planning, is that some of the requests for project work we receive are of an unexpected nature, and may arrive at any time of year. This is an accepted circumstance, which results in this organization participating in business planning both formally, on an annual basis, and informally, throughout the year. Occasionally, as a result, considerable flexibility is required.

Strategic Goals

- Improve quality of life for Nova Scotians
- Contribute to enhanced government policy and legislation
- Ensure direct citizen participation in policy development
- Address long-term priorities – uniquely
- Provide value and relevance to government and citizens

Core Business Area and Priorities

Voluntary Planning has a single core business, that being to enhance democracy and improve the quality of life for Nova Scotians by engaging knowledgeable volunteer members and citizens in the formulation of policy advice to the Premier, Cabinet and Departments.

Operationally, Voluntary Planning does this in three distinct ways:

1. Major Task Forces

In recent years, Voluntary Planning has accepted major projects assigned by the provincial government. The Fiscal Management Task Force and, more recently, the Non-Resident Land Ownership Task Force are two examples.

In both cases, Voluntary Planning recruited a committee of knowledgeable volunteers to thoroughly research the subject, give all Nova Scotians an opportunity to provide input and comment, and produce their best advice in the form of recommendations.

This is an extremely effective way to reach sound and broadly accepted strategies on complex public policy issues. The Voluntary Planning process considers the long-term benefit of the entire province and takes full advantage of the opportunity to increase public knowledge and awareness on the issue at hand. At the time of writing, Voluntary Planning has been strongly encouraged to investigate the topic of "Population Dynamics within N.S." As review on this

subject evolves, it is possible that a major proposal may be forthcoming in 2003/2004, making Population Dynamics a VP priority for some time.

2. Sectors

To fulfill Voluntary Planning's promise as a valuable and influential contributor to policy-making in Nova Scotia, the board of directors relies heavily on the advice provided by six teams of senior policy advisors, known as sectors.

Led by the chairperson, each member will contribute to an environmental scanning process and participate in discussions resulting in prioritized policy briefings or proposals. A major emphasis for each sector will be a regular presentation to the Board at which time they will bring forward their most important and pressing priorities from their societal sphere of interest.

These priorities, depending on mutual discussion between the VP Board and Cabinet, may emerge as major project topics or, may be forwarded as advice to Ministers. Individual Sectors, with Board Agreement, may participate in special projects of their own design while still carrying out their other responsibilities.

3. Direct Advice

On occasion, the Voluntary Planning Board, or other volunteers as assigned, are asked to provide advice directly to the Premier or other senior government representatives. This service normally would not involve consultation beyond the Board members or the set of volunteers engaged for the purpose.

Business Context 2003-2004

Core Budget	<u>Subtotal</u>	<u>Office Overhead</u>	<u>Salaries & Benefits</u>	<u>Operations</u>
* Major Task Force	132k	14k	118k	Provided externally as required
Sectors	154k	14k	118k	22k
Board	93k	7k	66k	20k*
Total	379k	35k	302k	42k

* Including AGM

Voluntary Planning will contribute resources directly to major task force efforts in the form of office administration and support as well as salaries and benefits for applicable Voluntary Planning staff assigned to the project.

Please Note:

All operations costs for major task force initiatives must come from outside of Voluntary Planning's core budget.

Budget Context Chart

Voluntary Planning - Estimated Budget Expenditures		
	Forecast 2002\03 (Per 2002\03 Estimates Book)	Budget 2003\04 (Per 2003\04 Estimates Book)
	\$ Millions (or \$Thousands if appropriate)	\$Millions (or \$Thousands if appropriate)
Total Program Expenses - Gross Current	<u>\$379k</u>	<u>\$379k</u>
Net Program Expenses - Net of Recoveries	<u>\$379k</u>	<u>\$379k</u>
Salaries and Benefits	<u>\$295k</u>	<u>\$302k</u>
Funded Staff (FTEs)	<u>5</u>	<u>5</u>

Outcome Measures Template

Core Business Area: Citizen Participation in the Formulation of Policy Advice to Premier & Cabinet

Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year	Target 2004—2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Raise awareness, education, and participation by citizens on specific pressing issues.	The participation level of those who have thoughtfully considered the issue.	# of informed comments received on issues under consideration.	To be established (2003/04)	1200 per year	Adopt a higher profile.
	The degree to which the media has been prompted to participate thoughtfully in the discussion of an issue.	# of editorials, articles, radio or TV presentations prompted on issues under consideration.	To be established (2003/04)	30 per year	Intensive use of IT to solicit public response.
					Negotiate major Task Force work.
					Fully activate six societal sectors with full membership.

Outcome Measures Template

Core Business Area: Citizen Participation in the Formulation of Public Policy Advice to Premier & Cabinet					
Outcome	Indicator	Measure	Base Year	Target 2004—2005	Strategies to Achieve Target
Impact on Public Policy in Nova Scotia	Adoption level of advice provided to Premier & Cabinet	Degree and potential effect of advice adopted by the provincial government	To be established (2003/04)		Targets and strategies to measure the impact of Voluntary Planning's policy advice to government will be developed during the 2002—2003 year.
	Level to which adopted policy advice has been implemented	Degree and potential effect of adopted policy advice implemented by the provincial government	To be established (2003/04)		